

# departure

## A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

*Editors :*

JOHN ADLARD . ALAN BROWNJOHN

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# DEPARTURE

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## DOUBLE EDUCATION

IF we had not, in the first words of our first number, disclaimed all "aggressive declarations of policy", our impetus would probably by now have been lost for want of contributions that fitted more exacting ideals. But from the start we were eager simply to see anything well-written which had original appeal or impact, whatever the style or persuasions of the writer. And since we had been informed that this was a period of minor themes and academic formality, we were especially interested to read the many contributions which showed signs of wider purpose and responsibility, or made original experiments in form and language.

From both Europe and North America there still arrive manuscripts whose volume and variety do not disappoint us. There is, however, a recurrent and disheartening choice which has to be mentioned. One poem comes to us which is uninspired in the most considered sense, but supremely well-written, and clearly likely to survive quite well the tough analysis of a wideawake critical circle. Another, whose appeal is instantaneous, whose theme is more profound and original, is sadly faulty in the mere mechanics of poetry. On the one hand the formal perfection of little minds, on the other the muddle-headed bards with impotent sky-tinctured wings.

"Il faut d'abord être homme," wrote Max Jacob, "puis homme-poète". Both the poet and the writer of imaginative prose need that double education.

In our third issue we spoke of humility in a little magazine. But however small our circulation, we are pleased to know that these pages are widely read, from California to North Africa to our certain knowledge, and perhaps much wider. If you are a new reader of this magazine, and if, as is our earnest hope, these pages give you pleasure, we would like you to consider joining the number of our annual subscribers, on whose support our economic security rests.

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Starting in our next number, we shall publish from time to time articles on recent developments in European and other literatures by experts. The first article, by Marianne Leibholz of Gottingen University, will be devoted to recent German poetry.

## I. R. ORTON

### *The Classical Tragedy*

Greek woman old and sombre  
Wiping cups behind the counter,  
You will never see  
The obscene as the ancients understood it,  
Never will your rules of drama be broken,  
It all takes place off-stage—  
The death, the murder,  
The pitched battles,  
You only see the slaves.

The chorus is a look  
Old and sombre upon your face.

Walking to another crowded room  
Through midnight streets,  
Before us go the figures  
Your ancient art excluded  
Or treated in another fashion;  
Wee Willie Winkie and Will o' the Wisp  
Lightly dance through the town and cry,  
"Though it is time  
All were asleep in bed,  
Where the quick look least like the dead,  
Come after us and see,  
Aghast, a cell window  
In the wall by the stairs,  
That breathe the smell of cooking  
And the faltering notes of instruments.

The meaning cannot be displayed,  
And the chorus is a look."

## CHARLES EDWARD EATON

### *Flamboyante*

I think of the world  
As a city of great age,  
And of the oldest feeling in the youngest heart;  
Step back, as for the passing of a girl.  
Down a cascade of stairs she comes to greet or part  
From you, the lover, primitive with rage.

She is a flame in an old darkness.  
Touch her, and the swaying of her gown  
Wakes the smouldering sleepers of the town,  
As though across the window pane  
The skies were faintly lit again  
With the conflagration of a long-forgotten fervour or distress.

And there, from many doorways in alcove,  
The many faces of awakening love  
Think of the darkest doorway of them all  
Where you, the lover, wait with no pretence,  
Nor pity what is past recall,  
As though the flame could never smell of innocence.

Who in the morning's gaudy light  
Will know at just what point of turning  
She stood in your path, the pallid, bright,  
The elegance of yearning,  
And she spoke to all the darkness of your name,  
As though it were your flesh that still must sire the flame?

## ALEX COMFORT

### *At an Exhibition of Mexican Art*

These were the thoughts of old Mexico.  
Horn, spine, beak, mask, and the avulsed heart,  
a ghastly deity like a congealed shout,  
a coiled snake and a crystal skull

here in their books faces of horrible anger  
are pitilessly engaged in striking blows.  
This stone fiend is the God of Government—  
Coatlicue, the Skull Venerable,  
goddess of napalm and the United Nations.

We know there were societies of death  
chaste; warlike, cruel—military louts  
victorious chiefly over women and prisoners,  
bending the customs of a milder people  
to clubs and slaughter-stones and engraved tables  
of laws beginning "thou shalt not", ending "shall die."

These too were killed by the Inquisitors.  
We have their blood-gods and their altar-stones,  
the tokens of the Aztec Way of Life.

## DONALD HALL

### *A Political Poem*

Where Eastern sunlight builds  
And fallen Troys decay  
A Giant walked the streets  
In ancient, worn array.

He stopped beside the ocean  
And lifted his battered head :  
"O all the birds of morning  
Have quieted, are dead.

"The cold of night has murdered  
The birds my fathers knew,  
Here when the earth was mother  
And the new-born people grew.

"The sun in the East is a phantom,  
Nothing but painted air.  
O let me die and the worms  
Strip my body bare!"

He stopped, and turned from the ocean,  
Walking a ruined street,  
And thousands of phantom dwarfs  
Clustered his phantom feet.

They looked to the sun in the East  
And danced in the warmth of the day.  
And sacrificed to the god  
Who breathed upon their clay.

## THE NECKLACE

by Martin Seymour-Smith

IT was ten-to-four on an Autumn afternoon. The gusty wind gathered up the fallen leaves into little heaps, dispersing and re-gathering them in different parts of the asphalt playground. The School was for boys of six to fourteen, of which the youngest were taught by Mr. Sheppey, —‘old Sheppey’—as they called him, in a hut-like building on the other side of the playground from the main school. He sat in the dark classroom now, watching the pale sunlight on the beech-woods surrounding the playing-fields beyond. The boys were quiet: they were reading *Martin Rattler*. Only Stevens had broken the silence by asking, with a suppressed giggle:

‘What are bowels, sir?’ He had just read the phrase—‘*The bowels of the earth.*’

Old Sheppey had told him that he had the makings of a very fine man, and that he didn’t want to see him go to seed. He knew that it had been an absurd remark to make, but had not been able to stop himself saying it; although time and time again he had told himself that he must not single out Stevens at all, let alone in front of the whole class. But Fairbanks had grinned, more out of duty than amusement, at his friend’s question and this had irritated him. He disliked Fairbanks, but did not know why, unless it was because he had a bad influence on Stevens. He had separated the two boys—Stevens, with his close-cropped hair, and square face; Fairbanks, with his olive skin, long hair, and delicate features — but this had not prevented them making signs at each other throughout lessons. It was all quite innocent: they were not laughing at him, yet he felt that they communed about some secret of their own which it was beyond his power to share: which Stevens, for all the liking he had shown towards the master, would not, perhaps could not, let him into. Stevens was the centre of his attention of course. He smiled to himself when it occurred to him that he and Fairbanks had at least one thing in common: their admiration of Stevens. Yet all the rest of the staff, and the rest of the class, treated and thought of Stevens as any other boy. True, his wife liked Stevens better than any of the other boys she had met: she had said he would go far; and he probably would.

Perhaps it was really Stevens he disliked, not Fairbanks: Stevens, was a powerful reminder of himself as a small boy; perhaps because he Old Sheppey, had failed and yet knew that Stevens would succeed, he hated him. In spite of one dust-laden ray of sunshine, the classroom was dark and chilly; but he felt a strange warmth, which prevented him from shivering. The boys’ faces were thrown into relief by this one wan ray of sunlight, making them look like a row of ghosts. He experienced a brief feeling of irritation which was quickly followed by a sensation of inexplicable happiness and a sudden desire to be kind. Fairbanks, as he and the staff alone knew, was the son of an Essex baker, a wastrel who had had the chance of prosperity but had chosen

to remain poor and neglect his only son. Poor Fairbanks, he found himself thinking: but why does he look like a young painter already? and why, with his delicate looks, is he so weak? He was too dependent on Stevens: it was not good for him.

"The next period will be out of doors," he said tonelessly.

The whole procedure bored him; but Tasker, the new young headmaster, had insisted that the last period of the day should be spent outdoors at least three times a week. "You will be collecting wood from 'The Forest' on the left hand side of the football pitch, up by the top goal". He looked at his watch, "There is another five minutes of this period to go."

When the bell signifying the end of the period sounded from the main School—they could only hear it distantly in the first form classroom—and towards the end of the periods Old Sheppey, like his pupils, would strain his ears in the fear of missing its welcome sound—the boys streamed out, Stevens waiting for Fairbanks, who sat further from the door. Old Sheppey sat like a statue on his seat: he felt as if his eyes were a photographic plate across which the boys were moving. He was tense and empty-minded, yet Stevens and Fairbanks seemed to mesmerise his attention. "How foolish", he thought, after the classroom had emptied, "I ought to be thinking about the foreign situation." This turned his thoughts to his brother, who was a clerk in the Foreign Office: he wondered what he would have to say about Munich. He wandered out of the dingy room thinking about Chamberlain and Munich, his head down. Automatically he made for his favourite spot—opposite the entrance to the main school, where there was a large building, once an indoor swimming bath, now the gymnasium, railed off from the gravel drive with a green rail; against this he would often lean, lost in similar trains of thought. He was surprised to find Stevens and Fairbanks sitting there, engaged in animated conversation.

"Why aren't you picking up wood?" he asked.

"Sorry, sir!" Stevens answered, "Fairbanks here had to clean his teeth." Old Sheppey smiled at the absurdity of the excuse (which happened to be true) and told them to be off immediately. He noticed that they walked arm-in-arm down the beech-drive that led to the football-pitch and 'The Forest'.

"Let's go off to the pond," said Stevens authoritatively, "we don't want to gather wood."

"Yes, good. Perhaps we'll find something: a clue to the mystery."

The mystery had all begun a few weeks back, when, for reasons of space, Fairbanks and Stevens had had to share a small room together. This room had been situated in the headmaster's house, which was divided from the rest of the School.

"Drink it, drink it, damn you!" they had heard young, athletic-looking Mr. Tasker snap at his beautiful French wife. And she had burst into tears. Often she had come into their room just before lights out, her eyes, they thought, red with weeping, and tell them stories of wild animals, or of the days when she had lived in the jungle with her father, an explorer. They had loved her. Yet every night of the ten

days which they had spent in that room they had heard Mr. Tasker shouting at her, and using cruel words to her. Once they heard her scream and his exclamation: "You told me I could do it when we were married: then why can't I now? All women are the same!"

Yes, it was Mr. Tasker, the Headmaster, who had made Fairbanks share a huge pie his father had once sent him, with the rest of the School; Mr. Tasker had divided Stevens' big tin of sweets amongst the whole class; Mr. Tasker who was at the head of a sinister gang. His wife had discovered him, and now he was trying to poison her: 'Drink it, drink it, damn you!' And what was that thing which she had said he could do when they were married? They had puzzled over this problem for hours, but eventually solved it: it was his crime, which he had then practised in a small way, and told her about. But now he was in a huge international organisation. And they alone, unaided, were going to catch him red-handed. The trouble was that the others didn't understand; and of course the staff might all be in it: almost certainly they were, except for Old Sheppey. During this term, therefore, with its long autumn days, a strange fear had assailed Stevens. Mr. Tasker could hand him over to the Doctor, who could say that he must be operated on and then kill him. They must not let anyone know that they had discovered the secret. Their purpose now was to find out the nature of the headmaster's crime.

They arrived at the pond, which was full of floating leaves from the trees above. It was quite silent: they could not even hear the others collecting wood.

"Wonder if they meet here?" asked Fairbanks, and Stevens felt frightened.

He looked into his friend's large brown eyes, but found no sympathy there: Fairbanks lived only in this mystery, he was its expert, its imaginer. And suddenly Stevens felt angry that his friend should so humbly follow him, accept his suggestions, answer his questions, when it was his own mystery, his own queer dream. Yes, Fairbanks himself was a part of the dark fear that had filled all his days for the past month. The wind blew up and a cloud crossed the sun, so that in the depths of the wood it became almost dark. Stevens wished he were still waiting by the green rail for Fairbanks to come out of the washroom after cleaning his teeth. Suddenly his friend cried:

"Look! Look! Stevie! A gold necklace!" Sure enough, almost hidden by a layer of sudden brown leaves, lay a string of gold-coloured beads. Stevens picked it up and examined it.

"This is very valuable," he announced. "What shall we do with it?"

"Don't you see, Stevie? Gold, gold, they steal gold: and they do meet here!"

The two boys looked at each other; and Stevens felt his throat contract and his spine chill with fear. Perhaps it was a trap. Perhaps they were being watched now. But he felt no response from Fairbanks, who was busy working out the exact operations of the gang from this new clue. Just then they heard the thin and distant blast of the whistle

from across the wood: the signal to return to the class-room. After roll-call they would cross the playground in the dusk and file into their high-tea.

They walked back, Stevens hurrying a little, always a few yards in front of Fairbanks.

"Here: you take it. We must show this to Sheppey!" He shoved the necklace into his friend's hands.

When they reached the class-room they found everyone there, and, to their mutual amazement, a beaming Mr. Tasker talking to the boys. Old Sheppey they noticed, stood aloof at the side of the room, while the boys, all smiling, surrounded young Mr. Tasker and bombarded him with questions about football.

Suddenly Stevens snatched the necklace out of Fairbanks' hand and ran forward towards Tasker.

"Sir! Sir! we've found a gold necklace in the wood! It's valuable, sir, isn't it? Won't we get a reward?"

Smiling, Mr. Tasker took hold of it and gave it a cursory glance. But behind his smile, Stevens discerned a sinister fury, a determination to destroy him — Stevens. He looked at Fairbanks in dismay, but Fairbanks' face showed only the slight smile of the successful detective. Mr. Tasker had taken out his pen-knife and scraped off a piece of gold paint, disclosing the glint of cheap metal.

"It's only from Woolworth's," he laughed.

Stevens felt an immense relief: it was as if all the darkness of the previous weeks had lifted. They weren't criminals after all! "Still, I'll keep it: it may belong to someone," went on Tasker; and laughing, he strode off across the playground.

Fairbanks came up to Stevens immediately. He was humble, but triumphant.

"That was very clever of you," he said, "you saw him change the real one for the one he carries in his pocket in case anything like that happens, didn't you? Now he'll kill us, unless we catch him first."

Stevens' heart sank; and once again he looked at Fairbanks' face to find some sympathy, some fellow-feeling in his fear; but Fairbanks was gazing distractedly into space, his brown eyes holding no trace of emotion. His long hair framing his olive-skinned face made him seem like a girl.

"See you at tea," Fairbanks said, and joined the others as they surged across the rapidly darkening playground, answering the summons of the bell.

The sound of rushing feet ceased and Stevens was left alone with Old Sheppey in the now almost-dark class-room. He burst into tears, rushed up to him and caught hold of one of his hands.

"Sir! sir! Fairbanks is trying to make me believe Mr. Tasker's the head of a gang and wants to kill us. Please save me, sir!"

"Of course I will," answered Old Sheppey gently and gravely. The words came to him automatically: he seemed to have been waiting for this moment not just all day, but all his life. "Of course I'll protect you. "Now you cut along and get your tea."

Stevens stopped crying, wiped his eyes with the back of his sleeve, and looked up at Old Sheppey with an ashamed smile.

"O yes, there is something to be frightened of," said the master, "and I know what it is: but I'll look after you. Now you go off to tea."

Stevens ran off, leaving the schoolmaster standing in the darkness. A gust of wind blew into the room, carrying a few leaves with it. They scraped on the floor and he shivered, as if assailed by the very fear which he had just dispelled in Stevens. He turned up his coat-collar, buried his hands deep in his pockets, and set off quickly for home.

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## THE WEATHER SHIP

*by Gillian Craig*

AT Notre Dame de Guildo police were patrolling the concrete bridge, their motor cycles drawn up against the parapet like tired, distorted insects. The tide was out and sea birds moved noisily about on the sand between the channels. The estuary was bridged at its narrowest point where the sea laid a long deep finger into the land. The steep wooded slopes were cut by a straight white strip of road which led down to the bridge on either side. High up, guarding the mouth of the sea, stood an old château, now a ruin with trees rising strangely out of its towers and a gold fabric of lichen on its walls. In the orchards on the gentler valley slopes the trees were pricked with small bright cider apples and at the foot of each they collected like drops of blood.

Two cyclists stopped on the bridge and talked to the policemen, punctuating their words with long drawn out noises of dismay.

'A ship hit a mine off the Cape this morning. A French weather ship off the Cape before daybreak.'

They turned to breathe into the water, straddling their arms over the side. They felt the shock of the explosion and the rush of the sea over the side and they saw black circles stifling and crying out for mercy in the dark. But they felt it as people feel a tragedy in which they are not involved, in a remote, morbidly sensual way.

A woman came out of the house by the bridge and shouted at a boy who hung the small arc of his body over the parapet. Salt had crystallised in dry white patches on his bare legs and feet. He remained motionless and she turned away with a murmur of disgust. The police stood looking at their motor cycles, pulling their big gauntlets on and off and bending to examine the shiny parts. Beyond their sight, over the bulging eyeball of the sea, the gulls worried and dipped incessantly over a patch of oil which shone like shot silk in the rays of the sun.

As the sun went down, the estuary birds collected in white feeding flocks on the sand. The boy spat into the bubbles of the river below and the filament was caught by the wind and blown back. He walked

down to the sand by the lobster pots and the beached boats lying unevenly on their sides, and he paddled the river while the sand stirred in eddies round his feet. The river ran cool and he could feel the power of the water against his legs. On the other side, he ran flapping his arms towards the tide and the birds rose leaving some of their feathers and their small white scars on the sand. For the second time that day the sea crept up as if tame over the flats, but there was no sign of any wreckage and the boy turned to go home. As he passed by the bridge, the police stopped him and examined what he had in his hand. When they saw that it was a small pink shell, round and coiled like an umbilicus, they laughed and joked, saying things he did not understand. He went slowly into the house by the bridge, hating them, and hoping his father's body was never found.

Between the granite headlands that sit out into the Atlantic the drowned rivers were flung back upon themselves by the force of the sea driving into the land. The fishing villages had sent most of their men over the bulge of the eye to modern places, looking for something they are suspicious to define. To the ones left behind the smell of the sea was better than mercy. They inclined their heads at the sound of the bell and talked that evening about the weather ship as they sat round drinking. But now they no longer fish where she went down.

## MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH

### *Birds in his head*

Her violent birds in his head he wished,  
And to find that secret at full moon went  
To a swamp's centre, where sweating  
He stood in his boat and howled  
"Take me at last, for your mystery's sake!"

And her answer thus: hundreds drowned  
That moment in a distant sea  
(Innocent they leapt from the shelving decks).  
Now his pain only their wingbeats  
In his head: and guilt at all such deaths.

## TERENCE HEYWOOD

### *Grisaille*

I have seen lace-makers in Madeira,  
young girls laughing as with fingers nimble  
they lightly embroidered the shroud of their short-lived sight.  
Laugh, girls, laugh, for you may as well,  
you who forget that every thimble  
's a funeral bell.

I have seen gold-miners in Africa  
thousands of feet under, and have heard them singing  
crude monotonous songs in Zulu and Sesuto.  
Sing, boys, sing while the heart is young,  
for the earth has phthisical echoes, bringing  
dust to the lung.

I have seen road-menders in Piccadilly,  
muscular youths exchanging casual jokes  
as the rattling shattering road-drill battered the blocks.  
Jest, lads, jest till the dread year comes  
when the drill, not you, shall crack the jokes,  
splitting the ear-drums.

But wherever I have gone I have seen people  
for whom the nodal present is an empty pit,  
the past but a worm-casting, and the future  
a blank.—It is these unfit for suffering I rather  
pity than those whom living has made fit.  
Pity, them, Father.

## W. PRICE TURNER

### *Every man his own oracle*

Hell's rehearsals catch us unawares :  
whether by lava, preserved, we perish,  
by napalm, running, screaming beacons,  
or aftermath rays of atom norms,  
always, aghast survivors cherish  
the happy smile on an innocent face  
whom death's cosmetic skilfully transforms  
to puppet statistic, fixed grimace.

When one of the hooded Furies beckons,  
we hear from the bath the telephone ring,  
and stumble, cursing, to feed our cares.  
Yet Pompeii and Hiroshima spilled  
but two small feathers from your fledgling wing,  
unthinkable phoenix, whose pyre we build.

## KAREN LOEWENTHAL

### *In the evening*

In the morning you held a promise in your eyes,  
but in the evening your hand did not answer my touch.

Outside the window stood the stolid trees,  
beyond, the wind flustered the pliant clouds,  
while we talked.

The sky was bitter grey,  
there was no sunlight there to light your eyes.  
As brief as one spring in the world's time was  
your smile to me.

At that moment merely I  
was the equal of the sun :  
kindling that reflection in your eyes.

But in the evening  
your hand does not answer my touch.

## GUSTAV DAVIDSON

### *Antithesis*

The body's pain  
Is the soul's gloss.

I fail by gain,  
I thrive by loss

Not Aaron's rod  
Or David's stain.

Choosing my god  
By a coin's toss

I find Barabbas  
On the Cross.

## ADRIAN MITCHELL

### *Escape*

His placed thoughts  
Moved in a system  
Of unconflicting  
Revolution.

The attitude  
Held freely  
His settled mind,  
But constantly ;

Until he saw  
The chained shadow  
Of the figure  
At the clenched window.

Suddenly he stepped  
Out of pattern,  
Left the standard mirror  
Admitting his desertion.

On the hard hills  
He looked back, alone,  
At the building  
Shaped like a machine.

## NUMBER ONE, RUE MIRABEAU

### A Note on the 'Jeunes Auteurs Reunis' of Paris

By John Adlard

THE 'Jeunes Auteurs Reunis' are now entering the fourth year of their career as a leading group of young Parisian writers: It was in 1950 that a number of young poets, novelists, and critics, "far from the cellars of St. Germain-des-Prés", launched what was now not only a courageous publishing enterprise, but also a literary striking-force. In these first three years they have achieved notable successes—moreover, these have been financial as well as artistic. Thousands of volumes have been sold, works have sometimes gone into four or five editions.

Their objects as a group are interesting. They include:

"Désinfection de Saint Germain-des-Prés",

"Enterrement de l'existentialisme".

And the J.A.R. also have their own philosophy—"Jarivisme"—but that would take too long to explain.

We have at hand a volume of poems, "Crayons Perdus", by a poet of twenty-two, Yanick Varech, who, we understand, has been successively a typist, a cinema usherette, model, newspaper vendor, and breeder of white mice. "Je suis une mal-rôdée", says the fly-leaf, "mais je crois cependant qu'il faut faire quelque chose". Her poems, though sometimes rather facile poetic jottings, always testify to a lively, combatant, and very sympathetic personality.

We shall do best, perhaps, to quote from "Les Francs-Tireurs des Lettres", an anthology of unpublished poets edited by Jean-Pierre Rosnay, one of the principal animators of the movement. There is vigour and variety here, and although such a poem as Etienne Dorian's "A Nazim Hikmet Libéré".

"Un jour dans le monde, tous les poètes

S'unirent et s'aimèrent pour sauver

Un autre poète"

is little more than an echo of the declamatory verse of the Resistance, "Rêve" by Jean-Yves Forest has an indisputable lyric appeal:

"Des vagues de volupté

Glissent encore sur ton visage

Et déjà tu dors

Je suis ce pêcheur épuisé

Par la tempête

Qui repose sur la barque

Ma cigarette laisse s'envoler

Mille danseuses bleues

Dans les faisceaux du soleil

Qui transpercent les ombres

De la chambre

Pareil au phare d'Ouessan

Qui allume sur l'Océan

Des feux-follets d'ambre jaune."

(Continued on page 19)

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse.*

Edited by John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright.  
Faber 12/6.

WHEN I first heard of this anthology my immediate reaction was to ask 'Why?' Michael Roberts's 'Faber Book of Modern Verse' seemed to me adequate to represent this first half of the century, particularly in its new edition with a supplement of more recent verse and with various revisions made from Roberts's own notes. John Heath-Stubbs' introduction, however, goes some way towards explaining the *raison d'être* of this anthology. The 'Faber Book of Modern Verse' was an anthology based on a theory, a theory of modernist poetry; this one is intended to be thoroughly representative. It holds no brief for any particular school, it includes the Georgians (skilfully selected) and it excludes the Americans except Auden and Pound. But it does tend to lack the excitement of the anthology based on one decided view of poetry. And the attempt to represent all schools is somewhat blurred by the fact that the poets are arranged in alphabetical order. Movements and developments can thus only be discerned by the cunning and knowledgeable reader.

John Heath-Stubbs, in a scholarly introduction, makes a valuable distinction between the poets influenced by the symbol of the City, and those more interested in the Garden symbol—roughly put, between the pastoral and the urban conventions, the two ways of searching for the modern myth. One wishes the book had been a more vivid illustration of this idea.

The editors have been at an extreme disadvantage in that they have felt bound to try, as far as possible, not to duplicate poems that have already appeared in Michael Roberts's anthology. Consequently the most characteristic poems of some poets have been omitted. But this very disadvantage has been the cause of some surprising felicities. It is good to find Yeats' marvellous 'Lapis Lazuli' and his less famous 'Circus Animals' Desertion'. One is grateful, too, for Edwin Muir's 'Merlin', Spender's 'Song', and Auden's 'Atlantis'.

As Robert Graves once pointed out when inveighing against anthologies, — all poems when collected together take on a kind of sameness, by reason of the mood and taste of the anthologist. David Wright and John Heath-Stubbs are biassed in favour of lyricism and formality, and they do make some of their poets look very unlike their usual selves. This is particularly true of the Thirties poets. Though this will make the book fascinating for those who already know the work of these writers, what will the new reader make of it all?

What is much more serious is that the editors have given a disproportionate amount of space to lesser poets at the expense of the more important ones. Thus William Bell has four poems, Roy Campbell six, A. E. Coppard three, W. S. Graham five, Herbert Palmer four, Stevie Smith six, and Anna Wickham four; while Eliot is allowed

only four poems, D. H. Lawrence one, Empson three, Kathleen Raine two, and Lawrence Durrell two. There has clearly been a desire to reinstate poets whom the editors think have been unjustly neglected, but in satisfying this desire they have lost some sense of proportion. There are also, in my opinion, two serious omissions—Terence Tiller and Bernard Spencer. Editors are often capricious but this is a kind of caprice that could have been curbed.

This book, then, leaves one with the feeling of respect for editors who show a discernment that is more than mere taste, but also with a sense of dissatisfaction. For this is not the representative anthology it claims to be. It needs a lot of supplementing, and the reader for whom it is obviously intended may not be able to afford supplements.

*Elizabeth Jennings.*

G. S. FRASER. *The Modern Writer and his World.*  
Verschoyle. 16s.

MR. Fraser is perhaps best known today as a literary journalist, whose reviewing of new poetry, especially, has been sympathetic and sensible. His new book, an amplification of lectures given in Japan in 1950, will attract many kinds of reader at first sight, for perhaps no one is better suited than he is to interpret the last fifty or so years from the viewpoint of our youngest writers.

He has tried, in his own words, to "put tidily on the page that rough working scheme of the development of English literature which . . . every practising critic has somewhere at the back of his head". He writes as "in most things, a plain man myself", wanting to "start the plain man off on the right road". Thus, after a chapter on the background of ideas, he traces the course, one after another, of the novel, drama, poetry and criticism, from the end of the Victorian era to the present day. Well, it's a lot to cover. But we get most of the 'movements' and battlecries, for what they are worth, and we are told, more or less implicitly, what it is fashionable to think of them.

For Mr. Fraser is modest: he does not wish to be dogmatic: he will present only "a generally accepted point of view". Thus of one novel, "from what my friends tell me," he says, disarmingly, "it is an artistic failure". But who "generally accepts" these very varied summings up? The author discusses seriously and most usefully the critical work of Mr. Eliot, Dr. Richards, Mr. Empson, Dr. Leavis and the American "New Critics", in what is certainly the best section of the book, but his own critical standards derive from literary journalism, from the 'Higher Reviewing', from "my friends".

This is not to say that we do not get instructive analyses of verse, or stimulating comments on prose-style. I should have liked to hear Mr. Fraser's views on Henry Green, for his notes on Christopher Isherwood are stimulating. But we tend to get not so much poets as periods: "the gay twenties", "the serious thirties": we are led to assume that the news-value of writers and groups is the important thing

about them (so long as one sometimes remembers "a permanent ordering of words"). Did no one write love poetry between 1930 and 1940? Mr. Fraser remembers the publicity and tells us that we were all Political and Anti-Fascist (except for those who "courageously" fought for Franco in Spain). But to turn from the publicity to the poetry: what we are told about the poetry of (say) Mr. Auden? We are given a summary of some of his early interests, an analysis of part of an early poem, and are told simply that all his later work (the work after 1940, for which serious readers are most grateful to him) is "more traditional". . . .

The book then is often disappointing, but it is worth a reading for its flashes of real perception: the remarks on Stephen Spender, Nigel Balchin, provincial life, the White Goddess. In the hands of a good W.E.A. tutor it might prove a helpful guide for the "plain man"; but the "right road" is surely not going Mr. Fraser's way.

Norman Beswick

*Orpheus Gone to Hell, and Other Poems*, by Chris Bjerknes. Round Quarter Series, Pamphlet No. 2. 25c. (Intro Magazine Box 860, Grand Central Station, New York 17, U.S.A.)

*Nine American Poets*. 1/6. Heron Press, c/o 40 Florentine Road, Stoneycroft, Liverpool.

THESE two pamphlets provide a sharp contrast in experimental styles. Most of the nine poets in the Heron Press pamphlet profess the bare, unelaborate, imagist technique associated in America with the name of William Carlos Williams. This has here produced poetry that lacks little in economy and precision, but gains little more in clarity and power of communication. For the most part, the poets do not show, as Mr. Robert Creeley hopes in his introduction, that 'a poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it . . . over, all the way over, to the reader.' Yet there are attractive and provocative poems here—examples are Robert Duncan's "An Imaginary Woman", Paul Blackburn's "The Birds", and Charles Olson's "Asymptotes".

Chris Bjerknes, on the other hand, uses violent, undisciplined means to achieve his effects. There is little here of Williams' concern with "the elements and minims of language". The poems—especially those in the *Orpheus* sequence—are vast, ambitious, and usually formless. There is communication, but rather than the literal meaning of the words, it is a sense of violence, or satire, or of an impressive but morbid beauty, that is communicated. As, for example, in the opening lines of "At the Beach":

into the iris of her sleep I leaned  
peered into her dark breast and found  
the mute face of the blue dead  
where the last currents laced into  
the blue silhouetted tides.

The poems often lack a firm grip on their central subjects. They vary in quality from line to line. But there are also signs in this first collection of Mr. Bjerknes' poems that we may expect considerable achievements from him in the future.

Although they differ, both pamphlets reflect a sense of urgency and unease about contemporary life that raises a question important for the future of modern poetry. There has been a tendency in some quarters, after the experiments of the first half of this century, to return to a more "traditional" style. If this has so far produced little poetry of any significance, the size of the movement (especially in England) demands that the more venturesome poet should take stock of his subject-matter and technique. He is emphatically correct in insisting that a changing world requires a new kind of poetry; tired metrics and classical witticisms are a poor response to the modern nightmare of international distrust and scientific amorality. But where does the answer lie for the perceptive writer?

This is too large an issue to discuss in a brief review. May I therefore leave it to the readers of these two pamphlets, in considering what they offer us in experimental verse, to make their own—probably divergent—decisions?

*Nigel Matthews*

## ALSO RECEIVED

A Selected Bibliography of Literature relating to Nursery Rhyme Reform. Compiled by Geoffrey Taylor. A True Aim Publication. (To be reviewed in a later number).

*(Continued from page 15)*

The headquarters of the Jeunes Auteurs Réunis are a small, neat bookshop at Number One, Rue Mirabeau, a street that runs down to the Seine to a bridge of the same name. They deserve more than this summary account. When you are next in Paris, go and call on them yourself.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ALEX COMFORT was born in 1920. Writer and scientist, his works have included "The Power House" and "A Giant's Strength" (novels), "The Signal to Engage" and "Elegies (poems), and essays on "Art and Social Responsibility." He is at present engaged in research into the physical and social problem of old age.

I. R. ORTON is the editor of the poetry review "Nightwatchman". Her poems have been published in many periodicals and reviews, notably "The Listener".

TERENCE HEYWOOD is the author of two volumes of verse and a book of travel, "Background to Sweden". "Grisaille", which has also appeared in "Poetry (Chicago)," is reprinted from his recent book, "Architectonic".

CHARLES EDWARD EATON lives in Connecticut. The author of a volume of poems, "The Shadow of the Swimmer," his work has appeared in many American and English publications. A book of his stories is soon to appear in the U.S.A.

DONALD HALL was born in Connecticut in 1928 and graduated from Harvard in 1951. At Christ Church, Oxford, from 1951 till this year, he has recently returned to the U.S.A. to take up a Poetry Fellowship at Stanford.

MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH graduated from Oxford in 1951 and has since lived in Mallorca. His poems and stories have appeared in "World Review", the "New Statesman and Nation" and the "New Yorker", and he shared with Rex Taylor and Terence Hards a volume "Poems", published in 1952.

GILLIAN CRAIG graduated from St. Anne's College, Oxford, this year. She has published poems and articles in several periodicals, and was a prizewinner in the "Isis" Poetry Competition of 1952.

KAREN LOEWENTHAL was born in Germany in 1923 and came to England in 1938. Three years writing poems in English, her work has been printed in "The Listener", "Modern Reading" and several other magazines here and in the U.S.A.

ADRIAN MITCHELL is now in his second year reading English at Christ Church, Oxford. He has been a recent contributor to "Trio" and "Cruz".

GUSTAV DAVIDSON is the Secretary of the Poetry Society of America. His poems and criticism have appeared in leading literary magazines in England and the U.S.A.

W. PRICE TURNER is the editor of "The Poet", a verse magazine published in Glasgow, and has contributed poems to "Poetry", "Outposts", and "The Window".

NORMAN BESWICK has published poems in several magazines and reviews. Formerly of Ruskin College and the Queen's College, Oxford, he is now working in the library of Birmingham University.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS has had her poems printed in many national and international magazines, notably "World Review", "New Statesman and Nation" and "Botteghe Oscure." A volume of her poems has been published this year.

NIGEL MATTHEWS graduated from Cambridge in 1948 and now lives and works there. His critical articles have appeared in English and American magazines and a pamphlet of his poems is to appear this winter.